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Unexpected Beauty

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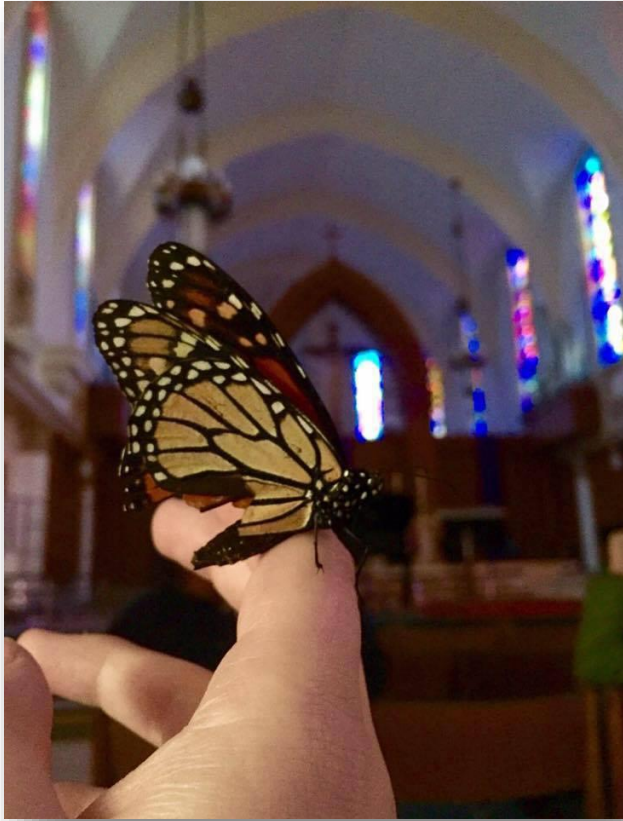
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Unexpected Beauty¹

Jaclyn Ross



I had heard rumblings of a Christmas concert in the chapel that afternoon; the weight of end-of-the-year assignments and final projects pulling my mind into a world of stress, I hoped the rumors were true. As I walked up to Sacred Heart Chapel, the “heart” of our LMU campus, my eye caught the glint of a bright orange spot standing out against the grass. Drawing closer, I found a large monarch butterfly lying still amongst the green, and I gently coaxed the fragile creature up onto my fingertips. The wonder I felt as I appreciated her intricate lacings and patterns was quickly overtaken by heartbreak, as I realized her beautiful wings were ripped and tattered. Knowing monarchs usually follow the California coastline south on their winter migration to Mexico, I realized she must have gotten separated from the rest. Injured and unable to fly on her own, she was left behind.

Knowing the kind of community she was accustomed to, I couldn't bring myself to leave her there alone in the cold. The concert would be starting soon so I had to move quickly, but I decided to see if Sister Jo² was in her office. Loving animals just as much, if not more than I do, I knew she would be willing to keep the little creature company while I was in the chapel.

But my heart fell as I approached her closed door and empty office. Left with a choice to make, I decided to bring this new companion into the chapel with me – perhaps she needed the time with God as much as I did. Cupped safely in my hands, my butterfly friend and I took our seats near the front as the pianist began to play. I closed my eyes as the music filled the sanctuary. Finals week was upon us, and sitting with these songs of joy dancing in my heart, I allowed the music to clear what was unimportantly stressful from my mind. After a time, I opened my eyes to see my butterfly friend still in the same place in my hand, contentedly opening and closing her wings ever so softly as she warmed herself, and we enjoyed the music together.

I'll never know how this story ended; I set the precious creature down on a purple flower as I left the chapel doors and headed to class. I returned later that day to search for her, but she had gone. SST:LMU

¹ From the editor: The community of writers chose to have Jaclyn Ross' end of semester reflection included in the journal. The writers felt that her story encapsulated our semester together and all of the interlaced connections we had learned to make... beautifully. Photo: Inside Sacred Heart Chapel, Jaclyn Ross.

² Campus minister Sister Joanna Carroll, CSJ.